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ABSTRACT

This document consists of Part 1 of a book of readings on at-risk youth designed to provide information and strategies for counselors, teachers, parents, administrators, social workers, and others who work with youth at risk. The two chapters in Part 1 present information related to population identification, the issues and concepts involved, and a framework to aid the reader in better understanding the myriad variables that relate to the at-risk population. Chapter 1, "Defining Youth At Risk" (Douglas R. Gross and Dave Capuzzi), introduces the area of at-risk youth; presents information relative to population identification, issues and concerns, and the concept of being at risk from both a developmental and educational perspective; and serves as an overview for the entire text. Chapter 2, "Poor Soil Yields Damaged Fruit: Environmental Influences" (J. Jeffries McWhirter and Ellen Hawley McWhirter), surveys some of the environmental influences that affect the lives of adolescents, stressing associative rather than causative relations. It presents a conceptual and organizational framework for viewing the issues related to working with at-risk youth. (NB)

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Part I

INTRODUCING THE PROBLEM

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Chapter 1

DEFINING YOUTH AT RISK

Douglas R. Gross and Dave Capuzzi

The sophomore English class was in the 5th week. Janeen Adams, a 3rd-year teacher at Gabrial High School, was administering an examination covering the past week's study of grammar and composition. As she gazed at the 24 students seated in front of her, her thoughts went back to conversations she had had over the past 2 weeks with four of these students. Bob, a quiet young man, had stopped to talk with her regarding his lack of friends and feelings of being alone and isolated from his peers. He is an only child and his parents are divorced. Bob can't seem to find his place in the school, and both his attendance and his attitude seem to be affected by this. Janeen offered some suggestions but felt that Bob ought to see the school counselor. Bob did not seem to accept this idea and said that he would work something out. He was not in class today for the examination; in fact, he had not been there for the past 2 days. Janeen had given his name to the school counselor and hoped that something could be done before Bob dropped out of school or took more drastic action to solve his problems.

Judy Gorman was pregnant and had asked Ms. Adams what she should do. She did not want to have the baby but, due to pressures from home, felt that an abortion was not an option. Her boyfriend was not supportive of her and wanted to break off the relationship. She thought about running away to her sister's, but decided that that would not work because her sister had two small children to care for and Judy felt that she would be a burden. She seemed to have nowhere to turn. She had talked with her friends, the school nurse, her parents, and now with Ms. Adams. Answers that made sense to her were not forthcoming. She seemed serious about leaving home and school, and Janeen did not seem able to change her mind. Judy was in class today but Janeen worried about tomorrow.

George Borden and Craig Mellon had stopped after class last Thursday to talk to Ms. Adams regarding their friend, Pete. Pete was not in class

that day and, according to his friends, he had gotten drunk the night before and was sleeping it off at home. Both George and Craig said that Pete did this quite often and it had gotten to the point that they were afraid to be with him. He got into fights and was not above breaking the law to get what he wanted. Both George and Craig admitted to drinking and some drug use; in fact, they said that most of their peers were also involved but that Pete was, in their words, "going off the deep end." They wanted to stop him but did not know how to go about it. Ms. Adams only listened—she too was at a loss as to how they could help Pete.

As the period ended, Janeen decided she would talk with Paul Bryon, the school counselor. She needed not only answers to some specific questions for the four students with whom she had talked but also information as to what was being done or what could be done to help these young people. It was her feeling that this was only the tip of the iceberg and that a large number of students in her five English classes were facing many of the problems these four presented.

The problems of these hypothetical students and the answers and information sought by the hypothetical teacher are at the very heart of the human issue currently labeled "at-risk" youth. This is not a new issue. According to Conrath (1988), "Principals and teachers have known at-risk youth for a long time. They have recently been discovered by policy makers and budget sculptors, and the discovery is progressing into implementation strategies for dropout prevention" (p. 36). Nor is this an issue surrounded by simple answers and agreed-upon definitions. The concepts that surround the student at risk are complex, filled with frustration for those who attempt to understand them, filled with despair for those who attempt to affect them, and filled with tragedy for the individuals who meet the criteria for being at risk. Few issues in American education have generated more public debate or greater activity. The results of the debate and the activity are yet to be determined. What is known at present is that a multitude of our nation's youth are at risk and that strategies must be developed to stem the growing loss of human potential. This chapter introduces the reader to concepts and issues that surround the term "at risk," identifies the population, presents at-risk data from a developmental and educational perspective, and provides the reader with an overview of the 14 chapters directed at working with youth who are at risk.

Concepts and Issues

Many problems are encountered in attempting to understand the concepts and issues that surround the term "at-risk" youth. Such prob-

lems center upon definition, cause and effect, calculating and determining the population, and the development and implementation of programs that will affect the various behaviors that place youth at risk. It is impossible to trace the exact origins of the term "at risk" as it applies to education and youth, but during the past 10 years the term has appeared frequently in educational literature, federal reports, and legislative mandates from individual states. In the September 21, 1988, issue of *Education Week*, Minga reported that three out of four states have either adopted or are preparing a definition for their student populations determined to be at risk. A review of these definitions indicates the lack of clarity and consensus about the term. One point does come through in all such definitions—the term is used to indicate individuals who are at risk of dropping out of the educational system. The characteristics of at-risk youth presented in these selected definitions contain such well-known risk factors as tardiness, poor grades, low math and reading scores, and failing one or more grades.

Factors such as these are certainly not new information for any person who has made his or her career in education. A more interesting listing of characteristics was adopted by the Montana State Board of Education in April 1988. This definition, as reported by Minga (1988), is as follows:

> . . . at-risk youths are children who are not likely to finish high school or who are apt to graduate considerably below potential. At-risk factors include chemical dependency, teenage pregnancy, poverty, disaffection with school and society, high-mobility families, emotional and physical abuse, physical and emotional disabilities, and learning disabilities that do not qualify students for special education but nevertheless impede their progress. (p. 14)

The definition speaks directly to the confusion that surrounds the issue of being at risk and somewhat indirectly addresses concerns regarding cause versus effect. From this definition it could be concluded that behaviors such as tardiness, truancy, low grades and so forth are the effects of the myriad causal factors. If programs dealing with at-risk youth attempt to deal with factors such as tardiness, truancy, and low grades, perhaps they are placing the proverbial cart before the horse. If the desired effects are to reduce tardiness and truancy and to improve grades, with the ultimate aim of reducing the dropout rate, perhaps more attention needs to be directed at identified causal issues.

The position set forth by the authors of this book is that the term "at risk" is descriptive of a set of causal/behavioral dynamics that place the individual in danger of a negative future event. With school-age

persons, one of these dangers may be that of dropping out of school; with others, it may be the danger of dropping out of life. when viewed from a causal/behavioral perspective, the concept of being at risk broadens, and dropping out is only one of many possible outcomes. Others would include, but not be limited to, graduating without an education, without goals and objectives, without direction for what comes next, without an understanding of potentials and possibilities, without appreciation for self, or without a knowledge of one's place in the larger society. Limiting the perspective of being at risk to dropping out of school not only does not do justice to the severity of the problem but also places individuals at greater risk for not receiving the attention they need to change risk-oriented behavior(s).

When viewed from a causal/behavioral perspective, the concept of being at risk takes on new dimensions and places the emphasis on individual and systemic dynamics which, if not dealt with, could well lead to a wide range of destructive effects. Such a viewpoint focuses on questions such as, Why are young people at risk? and What factors place them at risk? and directs attention to a set of causal issues and resultant behaviors that often have proven to be significantly related to the many personal and educational dilemmas today's youth face. Any one of these dilemmas could result in personal and educational impairment. In combination, the results could be both personally and educationally fatal. The content of this book is directed at the causal/behavioral dynamics aspect of being at risk and presents for its readers both information and strategies to deal with these dynamics from a developmental/preventive perspective.

The Target Population

One of the basic issues confronting those wishing to work in the area of at-risk youth centers on the identification of the target population. Who are these persons identified as being at risk? Are not all young people, based upon behaviors, environment, and developmental patterns at risk? Is it possible to separate out a special population of young people who, by behavior or circumstance, are *more* at risk than others? How does the professional determine where to concentrate his or her efforts and skills? Answers to these questions are not readily available. Much of the research directed at the at-risk population centers on the negative outcomes that result from at-risk behaviors such as poor grades, absenteeism, dropping out of school, and suicide. This research paints a bleak picture and provides its readers with the devastating human toll, which is too often the end result of youth at risk.

Drawing upon studies such as those of Paulu (1987); Hahn (1987); Barber and McClellan (1987); and Kushman and Hathaway (1988), it is easy to conclude that the impact stemming from at-risk behaviors touches all aspects of our social system. Paulu, reporting on at-risk behaviors related to dropping out of school, stated:

> In the 1985–86 school year alone, the most recent for which reliable figures are available, 682,000 American teenagers dropped out of school—an average of 3,789 each day. In urban school districts from Boston to Los Angeles to Honolulu, up to half of all students entering ninth grade fail to graduate 4 years later. For most of the 682,000, dropping out will thwart dreams and frustrate expectations. (p. 1)

In addressing the public cost of leaving school prior to graduation, Paulu had the following to say:

> But the price of dropping out also extends into the public realm. Dropouts cost American taxpayers many billions in lost local, state, and federal tax revenues. Nor are all costs in dollars. Seventy-one percent of prison inmates never completed high school. Dropouts become heads of households, where the cycles of their own lives are repeated. (p. 2)

Hahn (1987), in his synthesis of a broad array of research findings and program practices in dropout services and prevention, reported:

> The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) reports that, in 1985, 4.3 million young people between the ages of 16 and 24 dropped out of school—13% of the age group. Of these, 3.5 million were white, 700,000 were black, and 100,000 were from other groups. Moreover, male dropouts outnumbered female dropouts: approximately 16% of males between the ages of 18 and 19 were dropouts, while only 12% of females in the same age group had dropped out. (p. 257)

Hahn does, however, caution the reader regarding the lack of consistent practices in defining and tabulating dropout statistics. This lack of consistency tends to skew the figures often reported in the press. His research indicates that dropout rates may well be declining in all but the nation's largest cities. He reported the following:

> Dropout rates for the country as a whole are not growing worse. The public has been led to believe proclamations of "record" high dropout figures. Actually, in the 1960s the proportion of dropouts in the 16- to 24-year-old age group stood at about

> 20%. Since then, the rate has declined and remained somewhere between 13% and 14%. Among black youths, the rate fell from 21% in 1974 to 15% in October 1985. (p. 257)

Regardless of the exactness and precision of the data regarding the number of young people leaving our school systems prior to graduation, the numbers are startling. The impact on our social structure, as reported by Paulu (1987), is far-reaching. Nor is the identified population limited to the stereotype of the hopeless, unmotivated, or academically limited. The problem permeates all strata of youth. Fine and Rosenberg (1983) made this point when they stated:

> Who leaves school and why are critical questions for educators and policy makers. Although the answers vary by gender, race, and social class, the prevailing image of dropouts *simplifies complex realities* (our emphasis). Dropouts are presented as hopeless, inadequate, or too poorly motivated to compete in traditional academic settings. However, empirical data demonstrate that many adolescents who leave school are academically and intellectually above-average students, keenly aware of the contradictions between their academic learning and lived experiences, critical of the meritocratic ideology promoted in their schools, and cognizant of race/class/gender discriminations both in school and in the labor force. (p. 259)

The data related to the dropout point to a population that is large, even when viewed from the most conservative of estimates. This population includes youth representative of all ethnic, racial, societal, and ability groupings. Comprehending both the numbers involved and the inclusive nature, as this applies to a broad spectrum of youth, is a first step in attempting to understand the complexity of issues about population identification. Such knowledge allows readers to begin to develop parameters within which they can start to zero in on the target population. Within this dropout population rests the core of young people *most* at risk.

Further delineation is necessary, however, if those working in this area are to achieve an effective impact on this population. Greater specificity may be gained if this population is viewed from differing perspectives. The following sections address the concept of being at risk from a developmental and educational perspective.

Youth/Adolescent Perspective

Although the developmental period most descriptive of this at-risk population is adolescence, it is not the purview of this chapter to review

the vast quantity of research that has been written about this developmental period. This section is included because it provides further parameters and aids in narrowing down the target population.

Throughout the literature, terms such as *adolescents*, *youth*, *teenagers*, and *young people* are used somewhat interchangeably. Powell (1987), in a book providing guidelines for parents, said:

> The word "teenager" describes the group of young men and women who are no longer children but who are still short of adulthood. It is a generic term as are "adolescent," "youth," or "young person." While most of these individuals about whom we are concerned are thirteen to nineteen, the age boundaries are elastic, because "teenage" is a state of mind and activity. (pp. 3–4)

Newman and Newman (1986), in their text entitled *Adolescent Development*, provided further delineation:

> Adolescence is a period of life that is often mentioned as the time of transition between childhood and maturity. . . . Some people argue that adolescence is a by-product of the technological society. In this view, adolescence occurs as a result of the long periods of education and training that are required in a technological society in order to learn what is needed to perform meaningful work and to be an adequate parent. Societies create adolescence by refusing young people access to adult roles. . . . Our own view is that adolescence is a period of growth arising from both biological maturation and efforts at socialization. (pp. 2–3)

Ingersoll and Orr (1988), in an article dealing with adolescents at risk, discussed G. Stanley Hall's 1904 view of adolescence as a phase of "storm and stress" and countered that with the views of more recent writers who have taken these assumptions to task. They concluded, however, by stating:

> Still, for those who deal with adolescents in a therapeutic context, there remains a subgroup that does experience storm and stress, whose transition to adulthood is marked by turmoil and trial. Further, only a recluse could be unaware of the statistics that show an upsurge in adolescent suicide, pregnancy, and venereal disease, as well as continued patterns of drug and alcohol use and abuse, school dropouts, and delinquency. For some young people, adolescence is an extended period of struggle; for others the transition is marked by al-

> ternating periods of struggle and quiescence. During periods of stress and tumult, this latter group's ability to draw on effective adaptive coping behaviors is taxed. The resulting maladaptive behavior risks compromising physical, psychological, or social health. These young people are at risk. (p. 1)

Whatever definition or description is accepted, this developmental period is characterized by rapid physical change, striving for independence, exploration and implementation of new behaviors, strengthening peer relationships, sexual awakening and experimentation, and seeking clarity relating to self and one's place in the larger society. Add to this the pressures exerted by family, school, peers, and society to conform to or react against established standards and it is not difficult to understand the highly pressured environment of adolescents and the degree of vulnerability that exists for them. Degrees of stress would seem a logical outgrowth of this developmental period.

Adolescence seems most descriptive of a period of development characterized by such terms as *stressful*, *vulnerable*, *wandering*, *searching*, and *striving*. The emerging adolescent developmental profile taken from the research provides the reader with not only developmental issues tied to biological change such as puberty, but also personal and social issues. These incorporate areas such as the exploration and development of personal uniqueness and its relationship to other human beings, the gradual departing from parental authority and the strengthening of personal autonomy, the striving for achievement and competence, and the breaking through a characteristic form of egocentrism that David Elkind (1967) labeled the "personal fable." This fable centers on a story the adolescent tells him- or herself regarding personal uniqueness, immunity, and immortality that the adolescent believes to be true. Within this profile are found many of the common denominators that differentiate the individuals who pass through this developmental process seemingly unscathed and those who, in an attempt to meet the challenges, either by choice or circumstance, are unable to deal with the challenges effectively. Within this profile rests the youth at risk.

What is it that makes the difference? What factors or common denominators underlie this differentiation? Answers to these questions are at best speculative, but it is difficult to overlook both the choice the individuals make in their attempt to meet the challenges and the circumstances that surround them over which they have little control. Both factors play a key role in further delineating the target population that is the focus of this book.

The concept of choice related to the at-risk population is best viewed in terms of the selection of behaviors that will place individuals in danger

based on the outcomes of those behaviors. It is their selected way of coping with the myriad challenges placed in their path that differentiates at-risk individuals from their peers. The following examples illustrate this choice factor:

1. The young person who chooses to drop out of school as a means of reducing both the stress and frustration generated by the educational process;
2. The young person who chooses either alcohol or drugs or both as a remedy for the malaise he or she feels;
3. The young person who chooses pregnancy as a means of escaping a negative home environment;
4. The young person who chooses gang membership as a means of increasing his or her self-identity and need for acceptance; and
5. The young person who chooses suicide as a means of escape from what is viewed as a hopeless situation.

Choices such as these that place individuals at risk may stem from the need for what seems an immediate solution, the lack of decision-making ability, the absence of significant persons to aid in providing alternative choices, or imitative coping strategies the individual has seen modeled by significant others. Regardless of the source, the individual's limited choice repertoire is a key factor in identifying those most at risk.

The concept surrounding the term *circumstance* relates to factors within the young person's environment over which he or she has little control but that play a fundamental role in separating out those individuals most at risk. The following examples illustrate the factors related to circumstance:

1. The young person who is forced to live in a disruptive, psychologically punitive family environment;
2. The young person who is the victim of either or both physical and sexual abuse;
3. The young person who, based upon family socioeconomic circumstances, is forced to leave school to support the family financially;
4. The young person who, based on family values, attitudes, and behaviors, develops dysfunctional coping strategies to deal with the challenges presented; and
5. The young person who, based on academic ability, finds either no meaning or no success in the educative process.

Both choice and circumstance are discussed at greater length in the chapters that follow. Circumstance relates to the first section of the

book, which deals with causal factors, and choice is related to the chapters that deal with specific behaviors that place the person at risk.

Educational Perspective

From an educational perspective, there seems to be a good deal of consistency regarding the characteristics/behaviors of youth who fall within the parameters of the at-risk syndrome. According to Minga (1988), Grossnickle (1986), and Hahn (1987), factors such as the following serve as "red flags" for those who are at risk:

a. Tardiness;
b. Absenteeism;
c. Acting out behaviors;
d. Lack of motivation;
e. Poor grades;
f. Truancy;
g. Low math and reading scores;
h. Failing one or more grades;
i. Lack of identification with school;
j. Failure to see the relevance of education to life experiences;
k. Boredom with school;
l. Rebellious attitude toward authority;
m. Verbal and language deficiency;
n. Inability to tolerate structured activities; and
o. Being two or more graduation credits behind one's age group.

Factors such as these, viewed either individually or in combination, aid in the identification process. Young people who, on a consistent basis, demonstrate any of these behaviors or characteristics should be viewed as "prime" candidates for intervention programs dealing with those at risk. This type of identification, however, touches only the surface of the problem. The causal factors that lead to these behaviors must be addressed if intervention programs are to be effective.

Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, and Rock (1986) attempted to address these causal issues in their an sis of data from the U.S. Department of Education's High School and Beyond national sample of 30,000 high school sophomores and seniors. The authors looked at sophomores in 1980 and 1982 and concentrated on the differences between graduates and nongraduates. Their findings indicated that behavior problems and low grades were major determinants of dropping out. Added to this were areas such as family circumstances that included few educational supports and parents uninvolved in the ongoing process of their child's education. The authors also

found that dropouts tended to have close friends whose attitudes and behaviors also indicated alienation from school.

Wehlage and Rutter (1986) argued that much of the research dealing with causal factors for dropping out of school have focused on characteristics such as race, socioeconomic status (SES), and home environment. Factors such as these are either unchangeable or at best difficult to change. They feel that research should focus on the "institutional character" of schools and what can be done within this structure to hold students. This argument is also supported by Rumberger (1987), who called for more research on how schools themselves influence students' decisions to stay or drop out.

Kushman and Hathaway (1988), in a working paper for the Portland Public Schools, addressed this issue of how schools influence the decisions of young people by discussing the work of Wehlage and Rutter (1986) and Fine (1986). In both studies the emphasis was on factors within the school environment that increased the dropout potential for the population studied. In the Wehlage and Rutter study, the authors, using discriminant analysis, selected independent variables that were descriptive of students who fell into three groups: those who had dropped out, those who stayed, and those who were college-bound. Their findings led to two sets of discriminant functions descriptive of those who dropped out. The first dealt with low SES, low student expectations, and low academic performance. The second set of factors addressed the school experience and indicated that this experience leads to disengagement, alienation, and loss of commitment to the goals of graduating and continuing with education.

Fine (1986), in her study of a comprehensive high school in upper Manhattan, concluded that the school's structural characteristics that may lead to dropping out include: (1) a school that has a disproportionate share of low-achieving students and insufficient resources to provide for this population; (2) overcrowded classrooms; (3) teachers who are predominantly White, leading to poor communication with minority students and a lack of understanding; and (4) teaching styles that are based more on control than conversation, authority than autonomy, and competition than collaboration. These findings led Fine to describe the disempowerment of both teachers and students and how this disempowerment affects the at-risk behavior of dropping out.

In addressing this problem from the students' perspective, Barber and McClellan (1987) and Paulu (1987) reported on the reasons students gave for leaving school. Although both listings included personal reasons such as family problems, pregnancy, academic problems and so forth, the *lack* of factors such as individual help, more challenging classes, more understanding, support, and help by teachers, smaller classes, more consistent

discipline; and the *presence* of factors such as boredom as well as communication problems with teachers, counselors, and administrators speak directly to problems inherent in the educational structure.

The educational perspective, as this addresses at-risk youth, is discussed at greater length in the chapters that follow. It is important to note, however, that the research dealing with factors that correlate highly with dropping out of school is vast. Studies dealing with the impact the school environment has on this process and the causal relationship between this environment and the enhancement of at-risk behaviors in young people, however, is still in its beginning stages.

Overview of Text

This text, *Youth At Risk: A Resource for Counselors, Teachers, and Parents*, is based on the following assumptions: (1) Persons working with young people need information that helps them identify the individual(s) most at risk within the population; (2) Persons working with young people need to understand the causal factors that identify the individual(s) most at risk within this population; (3) Persons working with young people need to be able to identify the behaviors that place the individual(s) most at risk within this population; (4) Persons working with young people need to not only understand but also be able to use effective techniques to deal with the identified behaviors that place the individual(s) most at risk within this population; and (5) Persons working with young people need a resource that provides information related to existing programs that have proven to be effective in working with individual(s) most at risk within this population.

To meet these assumptions, the text has been divided into four parts. Part 1 contains two chapters. Chapter 1, "Defining Youth At Risk," by Gross and Capuzzi, introduces the area of at-risk youth; presents information relative to population identification, issues and concerns, and the concept of being at risk from both a developmental and educational perspective; and serves as an overview of the text.

Chapter 2, "Poor Soil Yields Damaged Fruit: Environmental Influences," by McWhirter and McWhirter, surveys some of the environmental influences that affect the lives of adolescents, stressing associative rather than causative relations. The authors present a conceptual and organizational framework for viewing the issue related to working with at-risk youth.

Part 2 of the text focuses on causal factors related to at-risk behaviors and contains five chapters. Chapter 3, "The Harmful Effects of Dysfunctional Family Dynamics," by Palmo and Palmo, presents information on the effect of family dynamics on the development of at-risk

behaviors in youth, therapeutic treatment modalities for dysfunctional families, the use of referral and consultation with families of at-risk children, and the process of assessment with families of at-risk youth.

Chapter 4, "Bodily Assault: Physical and Sexual Abuse," by Rencken, presents the incidence and effects of physical and sexual abuse, the dynamics of the youthful offender, and strategies for intervention. Intervention strategies are reviewed for both immediate and delayed timeframes.

Chapter 5, "'Who Cares What I Think?': Problems of Low Self-Esteem," by Meggert, examines low self-esteem as one of the primary causes of at-risk behavior and provides a framework and strategies to aid in creating positive levels of self-esteem.

Chapter 6, "When Life Seems Darkest: Adolescent Depression," by McWhirter and McWhirter, addresses the symptoms, causes, and treatment of adolescent depression, providing the reader treatment modalities through case illustrations.

Chapter 7, "The Society We Live In: Stress and Coping," by Terry and Milliken, provides information related to the stress response mechanism; explores the daily stressors of youth as these relate to biological, developmental, and individual relationships; and provides application and intervention techniques as well as recommendations and suggestions for program implementation.

Part 3 of the text deals with at-risk behaviors and includes six chapters, each dealing with a specific behavior that places the young person at risk. Chapter 8, "The Secret and All-Consuming Obsessions: Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa," by Kempley and Weber, addresses anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa from a female perspective, presents relevant sociocultural factors that set the stage for vulnerable adolescents to respond to both internal and external stressors by developing an eating disorder, stresses signs and symptoms that alert the helping professional, and presents theories of both causation and treatment to deal with the problem behavior.

Chapter 9, "Female, Single, and Pregnant: Adolescent Unwed Mothers," by Thompson and Sherwood, presents information regarding both current and future projections as these apply to the extent of the problem, needs of the adolescent mother, and intervention methods to work with this population. Exemplary prevention and intervention programs are presented.

Chapter 10, "No Guarantee of Immunity: AIDS and Adolescents," by Gray and House, focuses on AIDS information the helping professional working with adolescents needs. The authors stress the importance of learning the information related to AIDS and comprehending the anguish that AIDS is causing in our society, and suggest that the helping profes-

sional integrate this information into practices to deal with this population.

Chapter 11, "'I Don't Want to Live': Suicidal Behavior," by Capuzzi and Gross, presents information regarding both current and future projections as these apply to the extent of the problem, signs and symptoms that alert the helping professional, and causation and treatment modalities that are descriptive of the population and the intervention strategies utilized.

Chapter 12, "Tough Enough: Gang Membership," by Boozer, examines the youth gang phenomenon, setting the modern youth gang within the context of history and literature. The author presents information dealing with profiles of youth especially at risk of gang involvement and includes a case study that illustrates common manifestations of risk factor patterns. Ethnicity as a factor in the organizational structure of gangs is also presented. The chapter concludes with strategies found to be effective in schools that have experienced youth gang violence, and a call for a restructuring of our educational institutions in order to eliminate conditions that contribute to the emergence and growth of youth gangs.

Chapter 13, "'Why Say No?': Substance Abuse Among Teenagers," by Robinson, examines adolescent substance abuse from a variety of perspectives—psychosocial, historical/legal, and psychophysiological. The role of schools, parents, and treatment programs is addressed.

Part 4 deals with the school dropout and school and community programs that have proven to be effective in working with at-risk populations. Chapter 14, "Understanding and Preventing School Dropout," by Kushman and Kinney, discusses the complexity of the dropout problem, and presents information that addresses the dropout issue from the perspective of the student, the family, the school, and the community. Intervention strategies are discussed that focus on both the individual and the larger system in which the individual functions.

Chapter 15, "The Solution Lies in Programs That Work," by Hathaway, Sheldon, and McNamara, contains information related to regional and national programs directed at helping at-risk youth. Programs were selected for inclusion in this chapter based on the positive effects they have demonstrated with the at-risk population.

Conclusion

For those working with at-risk youth, the challenges are many, the frustrations are great, and the population increases daily. There are no easy answers or solutions to reduce the challenges or eliminate the

frustrations. The chapters included in this book highlight various aspects of not only at-risk behaviors but also skills and techniques that can be used to work with this population. As the information in chapter 1 indicates, the population identified as being at risk is not new to those who have worked in the area of education. What is new is the economic, social, and cultural impact this population has had and will continue to have on the continued growth of this country. Steps have to be taken to stem this growing dilemma.

It is the hope of the authors of this book that the information, case examples, intervention techniques, and program resources presented will provide direction and guidance in helping this growing population. It is you, the helping professional, who must take the information, techniques, and resources and apply them effectively. In the words of Hahn (1987, p. 263), "This is a large order, but this is a very large problem. And we know enough to begin."

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Chapter 2

POOR SOIL YIELDS DAMAGED FRUIT: ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

J. Jeffries McWhirter and Ellen Hawley McWhirter

Introduction

Today's youth face the challenge of growing into mature, responsible, and healthy adults amidst a storm of societal change. Advances in technology are occurring more rapidly than ever before in history, resulting in highly specialized systems of communication, transportation, and warfare—this builds additional complexity into already complex lives. The increasing mobility of the nuclear family, the disappearance of the small farm, and the closing of industries in the East and rapid development in the South and the Southwest, all underscored by a pervasive awareness of the nuclear capabilities of several world powers, make our society one in which nothing seems certain. For adolescents, already engaged in the tenuous process of moving from child to adult, these societal characteristics are added burdens that affect their development in a variety of ways. World and national instability modifies and influences the changes, events, and characteristics of local communities. This, too, affects adolescents and their families.

The purpose of this chapter is to survey some of the environmental influences that affect the lives of adolescents. Because of the inherent difficulties in experimental manipulation of the environment, much of the research presented in this chapter reflects associative rather than causative relationships. Nevertheless, these associations provide valuable information with significant implications for educational programming and for psychological and counseling interventions.

Before turning to the literature, a conceptual and organizational framework for viewing the issues related to working with at-risk youth is presented. Through the use of a metaphor, this framework helps to integrate the various topics covered in this volume. It also allows us to emphasize certain aspects of at-risk youth not considered elsewhere.

The Metaphor of the Tree

One way to view the factors related to youth at risk is to use the analogy of a tree. Consider the soil that this tree is embedded in to be the environment into which the individual is born. The environment consists of socioeconomic status (SES), cultural factors, and the political and economic climate of the times. It also includes the changes currently under way in our modern world—urbanization, the influence of technology, the feminization of poverty, and so forth. These variables interact in a complex and as yet difficult-to-quantify manner to influence the personal development of the growing child.

The roots of the tree can be viewed as the youth's individual characteristics: strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, talents and disabilities both learned and inherent. Springing from the roots, the trunk of the tree is intimately linked to this multifaceted network that serves as an anchor and source of life. School and family are the primary societal institutions that mediate the development of youth and provide structures with which to assimilate experience. Throughout this text, several authors present research, treatment interventions, and programs that link individual characteristics to family and school variables and also relate individual, family, and school dysfunction to specific adolescent problems.

The branches of the tree represent adolescents' contact with and adaptation to society. Some branches are healthy, capable of bearing good fruit; others, increasingly so in modern society, are broken, defective, and deficient. They produce at-risk youth and might be said to represent specific at-risk categories: low self-esteem and substance abuse, teen pregnancy and AIDS, depression and suicide. The fruit of our tree, of course, represents individual and specific youngsters: some whole and wholesome; others bruised and damaged; still others literally dropping from the tree. Although healthy branches sometimes produce damaged fruit and broken branches sometimes produce solid fruit, the fact remains that certain characteristics increase at-risk possibilities. Eating disorders (chapter 8), pregnancy (chapter 9), suicide (chapter 11), school dropout (chapter 14), gang membership (chapter 12) and depression

chapter 6) are among the at-risk categories that yield the fruit of troubled youth.

A wide range of interventions are proposed and evaluated within the above chapters. These interventions affect the youth in different areas. Thorough eradication of the problems of youth—an ideal for which we must strive without taking leave of reality—requires that we address the full spectrum of weaknesses and deficiencies within the system itself. Problems related to the soil, roots, trunk, branches, and fruit of the tree must all be considered in a comprehensive attempt to respond to the problem. For example, comprehensive intervention models designed to prevent teenage pregnancy must consider the concrete environmental reality of the target teenagers, school and family structures and influences, individual characteristics, and the youths' manner of negotiating with their environment. A just and humane society must provide effective interventions, resources, and strategies to help troubled youth—the fruit of the at-risk situation. We simply cannot discard them to the rubbish heap: Discarded fruit become the seedlings for damaged trees of the future. Nevertheless, unless we expand our methods and our focus of helping, unless we address the *causes* of our problems, we are doomed to failure.

There is an old story that is appropriate here. A woman was standing by a river when she saw a swimmer struggling to stay afloat. She jumped in and pulled him to the bank. A bit later, another swimmer floated by in similar trouble. Again, the woman dove in and saved him. As the afternoon progressed, this happened many more times. Finally, after the woman had pulled ashore her 12th victim, she wiped her brow with a sigh and began striding purposefully upstream. An observer called to her, "Where are you going? If you leave, who will be here to save all these people?" The woman replied steadily, "I'm going upstream to stop the son of a bitch who keeps throwing these people into the water!"

Much of this book focuses on "upstream helping." We applaud early prevention efforts because they seem to minimize at-risk youth. However, we would go even further upstream to deal with the environment. Consequently, the remainder of this chapter is dedicated to an exploration of the soil: the environmental elements that have been linked with problems in adolescence. Implications for counselors are provided in a final, separate section.

The Soil

Ecological psychology views the developing child as part of an interactive and interdependent system. There is no longer a debate on

whether the surrounding environment has an impact on the development of the child (Wachs, 1986). Developmental psychology has not only found ample evidence to support this statement (Hunt, 1961; Wachs & Gruen, 1982), but also specific aspects of the environment have been linked with development (Yarrow, Rubenstein, & Pedersen, 1975; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Garbarino & Sherman, 1980). The major environmental areas to be discussed in detail are those of socioeconomic status, economic and political trends, and community variables. These seem most critical in relation to at-risk youth.

Socioeconomic Status

Perhaps one of the most commonly noted variables related to the human environment is socioeconomic status. In the social sciences, attention is often focused on the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum and on understanding the ramifications of poverty. Understanding the dynamics of poverty among children, Cassetty (1982) wrote, ". . . is absolutely critical to devising a comprehensive strategy for dealing with virtually every other major social problem we face as a nation today" (p. 2). Although the United States is one of the richest nations in the world, there is still a significant proportion of the population living below the poverty level. According to Kimmich (1985), in 1981 over 20% of all children in the United States were living in poverty; among Black children this figure was 47%. In 1982, female-headed households made up 19% of all families, nearly twice the number of female-headed households in 1970. Among Black families, the number of female-headed households rose from 30% in 1970 to 46% in 1982. Female-headed families earned 34% of the income of husband-wife families in 1981—actually an 11% decrease in real terms from their median income in 1970 (Kimmich).

Ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented in the lower income bracket. In 1987, 6.0% of all White households were earning less than $5,000 per year, compared to 11.0% of Hispanic and 18.7% of Black households (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1988). As of 1986, 8.6% of all White families lived below the poverty level, compared to 28.0% of Black families and 24.7% of Hispanic families (U.S. Department of Commerce).

In his description of low SES, multiproblem families in the slums and barrios of America's large cities, Minuchin (1967) referred to these families as "anonymous" despite their frequent contact with societal institutions. He wrote:

> Their joblessness, lack of productivity, antisocial behavior, and chronic dependency on various social institutions repre-

> sent not only an enormous financial drain on the resources of the community at large, but also a threat to the feelings of well-being and complacency of the middle classes and the more stable elements of the working class that surround them. (p. 6)

Based upon his extensive work with such families, Minuchin described social interaction problems that include deficits in vocabulary and the basic rules of communication, little or no expectation that anyone will hear or be affected by what they say, little or no expectation of reward for appropriate behaviors, and inconsistent, ever-changing rules of discipline. These deficits, combined with other characteristics of multiproblem families, create additional stresses and strains for the impoverished family.

Children from impoverished families are at an increased risk of health problems. They are more likely than middle-SES children to have experienced low birthweight, neonatal damage, malnutrition, and untreated childhood illnesses, and to have had problems in hearing and vision that were unidentified and uncorrected (Hamburg, 1987). In addition, Hamburg reported that low-SES children in general grow up in environments with high degrees of continuous stress; environments characterized by ". . . .disorganized, impoverished neighborhoods and circumstances, with socially isolated, very young mothers, without fathers, and with minimal support from other family members or friends" (p. 7). According to Ryan (1972), the consequences of poverty include insufficient access to goods and services needed for family participation in society, individual participation in the labor market, and preparation of youth for future participation in the labor market. Low socioeconomic status coupled with minority status is a strong predictor of dropout (Wehlage, Rutter, & Turnbaugh, 1987). Poverty is the single greatest predictor of adolescent pregnancy (Ennis, 1987). In addition, various studies have linked SES with problems of mental and physical health.

SES and self-esteem. Although it has not been conclusively established that there is an association between social class and self-esteem, several researchers have found that negative self-esteem is influenced by being a member of the lower SES (Ryan, 1972; Ausubel & Ausubel, 1963; Battle & Rotter, 1972; Healey, 1974; Hawk, 1967). On measures of self-esteem, autonomous and prosocial functioning, competence, and imaginative capacity, children from low-income backgrounds tend to perform poorly or rate low in terms of the norms of the core culture.

SES and child abuse and neglect. In their review of the literature on child abuse, Daley and Piliavin (1982) examined the socioeconomic variables related to incidence of child abuse. Low income and child

abuse have been related in a wide variety of studies (Gil, 1970; Pelton, 1978; Young, 1964; and Shapiro, 1979). Some research indicates that poverty is a causal factor in creating conditions of social and economic stress in which abuse is likely to occur (Pelton, 1978; Gil, 1970). In a study by Gil (1970), 55.5% of the fathers in abusive families and 65% of the mothers had less than a high school education. Also, the unemployment rate for fathers was three times higher than the national norm. Shapiro (1979) found less than a high school education in 55% of the fathers and 63% of the mothers and also found a relationship between unemployment and child abuse. Young (1964) reported an association between child abuse and both low educational attainment and unemployment.

Olsen and Holmes (1986) completed a national study on the demographic characteristics of 192,000 youth who had been reported to be abused or maltreated. Law enforcement agencies, schools, Child Protective Services, and other social service agencies were the sources of the reports of abuse and maltreatment. Findings revealed that among children aged 12 years and under, nearly 50% of their families had incomes of $7,000 or less. Family income was between $7,000 and $14,000 for 40% of their families and $15,000 or more for the remaining 11%. In contrast, among the 12- to 14-year-old group, the highest percentage of maltreated youth were from families with incomes of $7,000 to $14,999. Percentages of youth from families in the lower and upper income categories were 29.3% and 25.6% respectively. Among both age groups, the lowest percentage of reported maltreatment occurred among families in the highest income bracket. Findings revealed that there was a greater willingness to report and substantiate allegations involving younger children, families of lower socioeconomic status, and non-White families. Perhaps these findings reflect a general belief that abuse is more prevalent among those groups; it may also be that fear of lawsuit or retaliation is greater when White or middle-to-upper income families are involved. In any case, these findings reflect an association between reported abuse and SES that warrants further attention.

Gaudin and Polansky (1986) suggested that neglectful mothers in predominantly lower SES neighborhoods may be more isolated than their counterparts in middle-class neighborhoods. Because a poorly developed social network has been associated with poor quality child care (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980), children of neglectful families may be more at risk if they are from low SES families than children of middle-class families.

SES and parent-child relations. In a review of the literature on the link between parent-child relations and economic deprivation, Siegal (1984) extended the trickle-down model of economics to the family unit.

More specifically, Siegal examined how economic deprivation affects the children's image of their parents and how this in turn may affect children's behavior toward adults. In addition, Siegal looked at the relationship between psychological well-being, child rearing, and economic deprivation. He concluded that children are generally not aware of or sympathetic to the difficulties associated with economic strain (Furth, Baur, & Smith, 1976; Baldus & Tribe, 1978; Berti, Bombi, & Lis, 1982; Jahoda, 1979; Siegal, 1981). Adolescents are more likely to attribute unemployment to internal rather than uncontrollable external forces (Gurney, 1981; Ho & Smithson, 1981). Thus, economic deprivation negatively affects the children's perceptions of their parents, which may in turn lead to problem behavior in boys (Hirschi, 1969) such as juvenile delinquency (McGarvey, Gabrielli, Bentler, & Mednick, 1981).

SES and stress. Members of the lower SES class have less money and education than members of the middle or upper classes. They are certain to have economic stresses in trying to make ends meet. For many, unemployment preceded their low socioeconomic status. Economic stress and unemployment have been associated with mental illness, depression, and suicide (Dooley & Catalano, 1980; Sheperd, 1981). Stressful life events such as low or unpredictable income are related to poor psychological well-being in young mothers (Belle, 1980). Conditions of economic stress also have been associated with less favorable perceptions between mothers and children, fewer supportive behaviors from mother to child, and more negative behavior at home on the part of the child (Zelkowitz, Saunders, Longfellow, & Belle, 1979).

As Siegal is prompt to point out, the studies he reviewed provide evidence for association, not causation. Controlled experimental investigation of the effects of economic deprivation would be difficult if not impossible to arrange without abandoning ethical principles. Nevertheless, the vast weight of the findings hints that conditions of poverty add an additional, complex set of problems and difficulties to the lives of adolescents and their families. Issues related to working with a low-SES population are addressed later in this chapter.

Economic and Political Trends

The 1980s have seen significant decreases in the federal funding of programs designed for children. Such funding cuts warrant the attention of those working with adolescents. In a study of federal budget cuts and their effects on children in the United States (Kimmich, 1985), 16 of the major programs for children were examined. Eight social service programs showed an overall decrease in real dollar funding of 14.4%

in the years 1981–1984, detailed in Table 1. Additional programs that experienced cuts in funding and the corresponding percentages of the cuts include the preventive health and health services block grant (35.3%); mental health (25.7%); school breakfast and lunch programs (40.7%); CETA youth training (53.1%); and AFDC (19.3%).

State and local responses to the federal budget cuts have varied, but several general trends can be observed. Programs focusing on crisis needs have been given priority over preventive programs. In the health care area, specific, child-oriented programs such as those focusing on sudden infant death syndrome, rat control, and lead-based paint poisoning have lost funding in order to maintain more broadly based programs providing basic medical coverage. Shifts in medicaid funding affect families in that options for health care have decreased whereas payments have increased; education and employment services, particularly those aimed at disadvantaged youth, have suffered even more funding and program cuts (Kimmich, 1985). Returning to our metaphor, if any funding at all is provided, it is to patch up bruised fruit.

Kimmich (1985) warned that the current shift away from social and educational services seriously limits the effectiveness of children's services in the future. She stated:

> Social services have long been the most income-dependent services, often designed to alleviate family stresses arising from unemployment, single parenthood, and other factors leading to low income. As government support for such programs

TABLE 1

Funding for Social Service Programs*

Program	*Percent Change*
Social services block grant, Title XX	−13.5
Child welfare, Title IV(B)	−16.7
Foster care and adoption assistance, Title IV(E)	19.0
Child abuse and neglect	−12.3
Head Start	9.7
Work incentive program child care	−100.0
Juvenile justice and delinquency prevention and runaway youth programs	−19.8
Community services block grant	−48.0

From America's Children: Who Cares? Growing Need and Declining Assistance in the Reagan Era (Table 3, p. 16) by M.H. Kimmich. © 1985, Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press. Reprinted by permission.

*Table title by chapter authors.

> *decreases without concomitant increases in funding from the private sector, it is the poor and needy children who will suffer the most.* (p. 93)

It should be of great concern to counselors, educators, and parents to know that these funding cuts take place despite evidence that the eventual cost to society will be greater than the cost of the programs. The cost of maintaining adolescents in state hospitals, juvenile detention centers and homes, alcohol and drug treatment programs, to say nothing of legal expenses, is phenomenal. If the long-term goal of counselors is indeed to "put ourselves out of business," then funding decisions must be made in consideration of future costs. We will return to this issue in the final section of the chapter.

Community

Garbarino (1982) described "community" as a geographic locale in which control, participation, socialization, support, production, distribution, and consumption functions are fulfilled through a variety of social and economic systems. The specific characteristics of a community are influenced by its history, its power structure, and its citizens, as well as outside events and trends. According to Garbarino, environmental support for families within a community is determined by the nature of local government practices, parents' workplace, the relationship between home and school, and the community's response to the need for day-care services. Each of these avenues of support will be examined in greater detail, along with network support, another important variable.

Local government. Local government, in its policies and actions regarding residential area regulations, pollution control, and renovation efforts, can undermine or support the family. Neighborhood improvement efforts can be facilitated or hindered by local government. Industrial pollution can cause deterioration of neighborhoods and radically affect the nature and pleasantness of a neighborhood, reduce property value, and discourage new growth. Modification of zoning regulations can allow businesses to enter an area, which can change the composition and character of a neighborhood. The responsiveness of the local government to community input via grass-roots organizations is an important feature of a community. Openness, encouragement, and support of grass-roots efforts can enhance the willingness of citizens to take responsibility for their neighborhoods, encourage greater participation in local elections, and facilitate greater contribution to and involvement in the community.

Garbarino, Gaboury, Long, Grandjean, and Asp (1982) proposed that government play an active role in encouraging the private sector

and nongovernmental agencies, such as neighborhood associations, churches, and nonprofit organizations, to combine their resources in support of the family. Tax incentives, changes in work hours, and funding for prevention programs are among the possibilities that would provide increased support for families within the community.

Counselors can assist in this process in several ways. Keeping up to date on community affairs, promoting networking among social service agencies, developing or maintaining lines of communication between policymakers and the human services sector, and encouraging dissemination of information regarding community needs and available programs to government officials and the community at large are but a few ways that counselors can facilitate changes in the environment that positively affect families and therefore adolescents.

Workplace. The workplace of the parents can influence family life via the existence of mass transit systems; openings, shutdowns, and layoffs in business or industry; wages; and unemployment levels. Work-hour flexibility, advancement opportunity, and job benefits are also variables that directly affect the worker and family (Lotterell, 1986).

Gordon (1985) provided a dramatic example of the effects of the workplace on families within a South African community. Gordon described what she considers to be a case of communitywide "learned helplessness" in which a timber-producing company had significant control over the workers and their lives. Researchers assessed the workers living on the company plantation as the most passive of all the company's employees. Numerous regulations restricted the activities of this community, with fear of dismissal a common theme. There were few social or recreational activities, nor was there any organized structure for decision making or negotiation. Workers were uninvolved with the community and did not perceive themselves as able to make any changes in their situation. Although the community is in South Africa, this description is similar to the situation of non-union factory workers, unskilled laborers, farm workers, and others in this country whose lack of education and organization frequently leave them unaware of their rights and at the mercy of their employers.

A community development program was undertaken to provide training in leadership, conducting meetings, and organizational skills for the plantation workers. A local resident was appointed to serve as a liaison between workers and management, and hearings were organized for unfairly dismissed employees. After 1 year, workers were demonstrating significant levels of autonomy by organizing regular recreational events, holding elections within community committees, and organizing cooperative ventures in plowing and herding.

By introducing mechanisms and training for implementing even small amounts of control, significant and positive changes occurred among the workers and their families. The workplace was still a dominating force in their lives, but their response to the system had changed. These results have important implications for counselors working with adolescents and families. They lend promise to the second option of the age-old dilemma—do we assist clients to accept their life situations and adapt to their hardships, or do we facilitate their challenge of the status quo? The question is neither as simple nor as black-and-white as it seems here, but in some form or another it lies at the heart of every therapeutic intervention.

Schools. Size of schools, the areas they serve, assistance available to low-income families, transportation, and the existence of bilingual educational opportunities affect children and their families. Educational policies and reform have direct and significant impact upon children, adolescents, and their families. Aubrey (1988) reported that although the need for educational reform in the schools is agreed upon, and even when "excellence" is the goal of such reform, definitions of excellence are numerous and frequently incompatible.

One frequently used definition of excellence is higher standardized test scores, which could be achieved through decreasing electives and increasing the required number of college preparation courses. Heavier emphasis on the "basics" would presumably increase learning in the areas addressed by standardized testing. It may also lead to an increased dropout rate, resulting in a smaller pool of test takers who presumably do better on standardized tests. An alternative, and according to Aubrey "all too infrequently" used, measure of excellence would include indices such as declining dropout rates, declining violence, lowered occurrence of vandalism, and greater involvement of students in the local community. These measures of excellence would involve the implementation of different strategies. Consider the impact of each "type" of excellence on one subgroup of children: ethnic minorities.

In a review of the literature related to the status of ethnic minorities in primary and secondary education, Moore (1988) suggested that factors such as low expectations on the part of teachers and the students themselves contribute to lower achievement of minority students. Ethnic minority children also frequently enter school with attitudes and information processing skills that conflict with instructional modes and the teachers' style. Discouragement and dropout are common among these children and adolescents; confronting them with an increase in college preparation requirements may only add to despair and may not result in any increases in their particular test scores. Moore suggested that

achievement can be enhanced among these children through a variety of means including early vocational counseling, educating teachers about appropriate and inappropriate applications of standardized test score data, and facilitating understanding of cultural differences between teachers and pupils. These interventions may help to make the educational process more appropriate, interesting, and beneficial for ethnic minority students and produce results such as decreases in dropout and vandalism; standardized test scores, however, may not improve in a statistically significant way.

Test score increases are the far more common interpretation of "excellence." Counselors, parents, and educators are daily witnesses to the effects of school policy upon children and adolescents. We are in a unique position to witness the cost of "raising test scores" and other educational changes. If scores increase and dropout doubles, do we dare call our efforts successful? Some definitions of excellence may lead to very negative outcomes for at-risk groups of adolescents. Hodgkinson (1985) highlighted the importance of this issue. Results of his study indicate that children entering our school systems in the future will increasingly be children who: are from single parent homes; were born to teenage mothers; were born prematurely; are living as latchkey children; and are children living in blended families. He predicted that dropout will remain high, especially among Black and Hispanic youth, fewer minority youth will enter high school, and a smaller percentage of children will have participated in Head Start and other preschool programs. Hodgkinson also predicted that by the year 2000, school children will be poorer and more ethnically and linguistically diverse than ever before. Issues of school reform and educational progress demand our concern, attention, and response.

Day care. The makeup of a community and its political structure may influence day-care opportunities for parents. Where parents are organized or have a political voice, day care may be given a high priority. Local government can encourage businesses, organizations, and industries to provide day care through incentive programs, and consistent regulation and inspection of such facilities can ensure program quality. Funding may be regularly allocated to day-care programs or directed away from day care in favor of other services and organizations. A community's commitment to the family may be measured in part by its efforts to provide day care.

Network support. One final aspect of the community to be addressed here is network support. Network support refers to the informal set of relationships that an individual has with neighbors, friends, and coworkers that provides emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance or resources. In a review of the literature on social support, Leavy

(1983) reported that across all studies one finding is consistent: the absence of such support is associated with increased psychological distress. Neighborhood characteristics, such as stability (Garbarino, 1982), have definite effects upon the availability of social support networks.

As mentioned earlier, research indicates that quality of child rearing is affected by the adequacy of the mother's social network (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980). Neglectful families have poor quality child rearing. In a study of the social isolation of neglectful mothers, Polansky, Chalmers, Buttenweiser, and Williams (1981) found that neglectful mothers not only lacked social and relationship skills, but were also isolated and rejected by others. Gaudin and Polansky (1986) showed a difference between responses to non-neglecting and neglecting families, with subjects evidencing clear distancing from neglectful families.

The quality of child rearing also has been linked to social support. Cotterell (1986) found that the mother's network support exerted a powerful influence on her child-rearing processes. Cognitive stimulation, maternal warmth, mother-child play, and teaching were significantly related to the mother's support; mothers with greater support engaged in these behaviors more frequently than mothers with less support.

Cohesiveness has been described as the extent to which individuals view their neighborhood as supportive, friendly, and a potential source of help (Cohen, Struening, Muhlin, Genevie, Kaplan, & Peck, 1982). Individuals who view their neighborhood as cohesive apparently experience support, friendship, and helpfulness via a social support network. In a study by Cohen et al., neighborhood cohesion was directly predictive of two measures of well-being. Results were consistent across ethnic groups and income levels. Implications are that having a support network contributes to a general feeling of well-being.

The emphasis that network therapy places upon social networks provides additional testimony to the importance of social support (Schoenfeld, Halevy-Martini, Hemley-Van der Velden, & Ruhf, 1985). Network therapy involves the utilization of the client's family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and significant others to provide emotional support and physical assistance to clients and their families, as well as to promote mutual sharing of responsibilities. Although it has developed slowly (Speck & Attneave, 1973), network therapy has received increasing attention and has been the focus of several studies (Garrison, 1974; Rueveni, 1979; Beels, 1981; Trimble, 1981; and Schoenfeld et al., 1985). In a study by Schoenfeld et al. (1985), situationally, demographically, and diagnostically similar clients were compared to clients who received network therapy. Posttreatment utilization of mental health services showed a 17% decrease in usage by those clients who had been recommended for network therapy but had not received it, compared to

a 76% decrease for treatment recipients. Follow-up investigation by the researchers revealed that 1 year later all subjects but one were maintaining gains made in therapy.

Network support is a variable affected in part by the individual's ability to develop and utilize available resources; the quality and accessibility of supports is a feature of the surrounding environment. Counselors regularly assess the support networks of their clients in the therapeutic process. Education about and application of relationship and communication skills are often a part of this process, particularly with adolescents. Counselors may be in a position to go one step further—to make change in the client's environment so as to increase the amount of support available. This can evolve most naturally within the structure of the school setting. Meeting with parents and investigating the work environment may open possibilities for increased support outside of school.

Summary

The preceding sections were designed to highlight some of the features of the environment that affect adolescents. Significant features of the environment include socioeconomic status, national economic trends, and community variables. These areas are by no means exhaustive of the channels by which the environment influences development; nor is the information presented intended to provide a complete review of the literature. Nevertheless, we consider these areas to be among the most critical of those affecting adolescents. Much of the work in this area has been carried out by researchers in sociology, social work, and human development. Understanding environmental influences must therefore be multidisciplinary in order to take advantage of existing knowledge.

Perhaps the most far-reaching of these influences is socioeconomic status—particularly for those at the lower end of the spectrum. The influence of poverty extends beyond nutritional deprivation and other physical stressors into the quality and amount of education received, potential work environments, and political voice. Funding cuts in recent years have resulted in a decrease in resources available to all children but in particular the children of low-income families in the areas of health, nutrition, day care, and job training. What can counselors and educators do to address the effects of the environment upon adolescents? The following section provides suggestions and recommendations for an active approach to the problem.

Implications

It is foolish to think that major changes in our society are in the offing, or that counselors, teachers, and parents can single-handedly carry them out. Nevertheless, they can make a significant contribution to the change process in three primary ways. The first is through developing and utilizing techniques for helping individuals to confront their environments in an active way rather than promoting a passive posture toward their environmental circumstances. When facilitating the growth of awareness and skills for addressing environmental problems, counselors must be careful not to convey the message that passivity has been the cause of these problems. Caution must be exercized in utilizing this approach so that it does not take on characteristics of "blaming the victim."

One promising avenue for facilitating self-awareness and skills development is through group work. Group work can enable individuals to regain a sense of community and belongingness, while at the same time inspiring confidence and renewed hope (McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 1988). Sue and Zane (1980) suggested that under certain circumstances, lack of personal autonomy can increase alienation, diminish the sense of community, and lead to uninvolvement in community systems and organizations. It may well be that families who are living in poverty or who are experiencing other adverse environmental conditions are unable to break free of these conditions for reasons including a perceived lack of control over their situation.

Morrow and Hawxhurst (1988) discussed a group-process model that has evolved out of the social change movement. The processes highlighted can be easily applied to group work with impoverished individuals, parents wanting more voice in the school district, workers feeling controlled and alienated by their workplace, neighborhood residents concerned about pollution, zoning, or crime, and many other groups. Among the important processes presented (Morrow & Hawxhurst, 1988; Hawxhurst & Morrow, 1984) are: empowerment (the process of recognizing personal power in oneself and others); responsibility (fostering the sense that members are responsible for facilitating one another's growth as well as their own); communication (especially recognizing that members with more societal privilege and power must not be favored over those with less power and experience); and meeting and group facilitation (teaching the skills of organizing and running meetings to *all* group members). Utilizing these and other processes in group work, in combination with educational activities, can effectively enhance awareness of the influence of the environment, encourage recognition that

change is possible, and facilitate the development of skills and resources for creating change.

Turning back to the example of the plantation workers in South Africa (Gordon, 1985), it is clear that group work was effective in enhancing their personal development and political voice. The workers began to take a more active approach to coping with and changing their living situation. It has been through the widespread organization of groups that institutional changes have been made in our society, such as laws regarding civil rights and reform in care for the institutionalized. Group work can enhance a sense of power and capacity among individuals who traditionally have no power.

But counselors can't stop there. There are limitations to the systemic changes that can be made at the grass-roots level. A second way for counselors to be involved in the process of confronting the environment is to seek change at the level of those who have the power to legislate, to fund, and to affect the structure of the environment. Schorr (1988) contended that counselors have both the knowledge and the resources to address the needs of the poor and break the cycle of poverty. She views one of the major obstacles to the development of such programs as the lack of current research information on the part of administrators, academics, practitioners, and public policy analysts. Comer (1987) suggested with respect to schools:

> Economic and social risk-producing factors in the larger society cannot be greatly modified by school people. But educational policy and practice at every level of government, preservice training, and school district and building can be modified to improve the learning of students at risk. (p. 14)

As previously stated, counselors, for better or worse, have insight into the most intimate difficulties and concerns of members of our society. They are privileged witnesses to the impact that society has on individuals and groups. Counselors can silently curse the ills of society or make their observations, research findings, and suggestions known. Community education at a local and national level is a role for which counselors are well qualified. And just as a grass-roots neighborhood committee has more voice and effectiveness than a handful of individuals, counselors organized for the purpose of addressing issues and making recommendations will be more effective than isolated individuals offering suggestions.

Namir and Weinstein (1982) suggested that one hindrance to the development of adequate services for youth is the fact that so many of the solutions require fundamental sociopolitical changes. The effects of inadequate nutrition and housing, the lack of birth-control information,

poverty, and discrimination cannot be prevented with crisis-oriented programs. Ultimately, prevention means changing the environment that fosters such problems. The reality is that prevention efforts must involve critical analysis of the structure of society and reflect the results of such analyses in programming, planning, and action.

Perhaps it is time to add a new dimension to the traditional counselor role. Counselors have always been advocates of individual growth and development. With growing recognition of the role that environment plays in human development, social activism is the natural arena into which counselors must move if they are to remain faithful to that advocacy. As social activists, counselors can promote awareness of the damaging effects of poverty, undernourishment, discrimination, overcrowding, and poor housing. Counselors can urge the adoption of mental health programs within schools and communities that address specific environmental circumstances, inadequacies, and limitations. Counselors can make their views known to local and national leaders through letters and votes, seminars, and publications. Counselors can be more aware of how local politics are effecting changes in mental health policy in communities.

Hurvitz (1977) regarded comprehensive societal change as a necessary condition for mental health, viewing capitalism as a system that denies physical and psychological security for most Americans. In his description of "radical therapy," Hurvitz listed a broad scope of activities oriented toward human rights, issues of labor and peace, and the development of alternate therapies and facilities. He wrote, "These activities are associated with the radical therapist's vision of and work for a non-exploitative society that fosters humanist and life-affirming relationships between people" (p. 69). Through various forms of social activism, ranging from letter writing, to professional publication, to public demonstrations, counselors can work as powerful advocates for the people they serve. The effectiveness of what counselors do in schools and agencies will be magnified by their efforts beyond closed doors and in the public eye.

A third means by which counselors can be effective in addressing the effects of the environment on adolescent development is through utilizing and promoting an economic framework for program analysis. Unfortunately, many programming decisions are based on monetary rather than human costs, short-term rather than long-term costs, and common assumptions rather than research findings. As a result, money is directed into crisis intervention rather than prevention, with a much greater cost to society. Mayer and Butterworth (1979) provided an example of the economic benefits of prevention. Vandalism in the Los Angeles public schools was costing more than $5 million each year, and over 400

personnel were involved in security and in vandalism repair. A prevention program was implemented that included participation by teachers, students, and parents; the results were considerable monetary savings as well as the noneconomic benefit of greater satisfaction among students, parents, and school personnel. It is programs such as this one that are being eliminated in favor of crisis intervention.

Beker, Eisikovits, and Guttmann (1987) presented an economic model for program evaluation using the case of farm-family adolescents. They proposed that the cost-effectiveness of intervention programs be assessed with consideration of the following factors: the economic value of adolescents; their noneconomic value; the economic cost of adolescents; and their noneconomic cost. Economic value pertains to the direct work contribution of the adolescent to the family household, both within the home and through outside employment, and also the assurance adolescents can provide that they can assist financially when needed. Noneconomic values are associated with the psychological satisfaction parents derive from their children. This satisfaction can be attributed to companionship provided by their children, emotional security, a sense of family continuity and competence, stimulation, the opportunity to guide others' lives and make sacrifices for them, and many other positive elements of family life. Economic costs of adolescents include direct maintenance expenses and the indirect costs associated with opportunities the parents miss. Noneconomic costs are psychological and emotional; they include the anxieties, concerns, frustrations, and sorrows associated with limitations on freedom, disruptions of the household, misbehaviors and problems, illnesses and economic insecurities, and the overall physical strain of having children.

Using this model, the cost-effectiveness of programs is determined by assessing economic costs. Given the optimal economic value, in dollar terms, of adolescents in the target area, subtract the dollar value of troubled youth (whose productivity is presumed to decrease); add to this figure the average net dollar cost of time lost and lowered efficiency within the family (per troubled youth) per year; and finally, add the average net dollar cost (per troubled youth) of the public and subsidized services required for the troubled youth. The resulting figure, multiplied by the actual number of adolescents in the target area, yields a quantitative measure of the net cost of troubled youth. This cost, projected over a number of years, can be compared with the cost of specific prevention programs.

Of course the greatest difficulty with this model is arriving at dollar estimates for youthful productivity, time lost, and so forth. Research focusing on the development of accurate and valid measures of economic

costs and values is a necessity. The contributions of practitioners as well as researchers will be invaluable in developing such measures.

In summary, counselors can address the effect of the environment through their work in three ways. In their direct work with clients, counselors can facilitate awareness of the environment, its impact on clients, and ways that clients might more actively challenge the limitations that the environment has placed on them. Group work is one means of promoting such growth. A second way that counselors can be effective is through their own direct participation in the social change process. Professional publications and seminars, political awareness and education efforts, and involvement in the local community are some ways that counselors can be effective. A third avenue for action is through the promotion of an economic framework for planning and evaluating prevention programs. Through analysis of the economic and noneconomic costs and values of programs, the benefits of early prevention efforts will be demonstrated in terms that the American public and funding agencies can appreciate and understand.

Dramatic changes in our society have repercussions that are felt even to the roots of the tree. The situation is more precarious for those roots embedded in rocky and unnourishing soil. Besides patching up bruised fruit, repairing damaged branches, and bolstering weak trunks and roots, counselors must also address ways to improve the soil. As the horticulturist must be concerned with the whole of the tree, so too must we be concerned with the whole of the adolescent at risk.

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